

VZCZCXRO6237
PP RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHDBU #0474/01 0720553
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 130553Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6936
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1433
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1474
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1463
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1414
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1363
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1428
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1014
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1460
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1508
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 0807
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 8067

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000474

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KFLU](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [KSTH](#) [WHO](#)

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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN INTERNATIONAL DONORS PREPARE FOR AVIAN FLU

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¶1. Although Tajikistan's government agencies are taking steps to prevent Avian Influenza and control an outbreak, they lack technical expertise and need assistance from international organizations. At a poorly attended donor's meeting, representatives from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said the State Veterinary Service reported its diagnostics and testing materials Russia donated have run out. In addition to more diagnostic reagents, the official inspectors need personal protection suits and government employees need training in new techniques of detecting, monitoring, and handling an outbreak. To date, Tajikistan has no reported incidents of Avian Influenza.

¶2. The Tajik Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture have endorsed a draft of the National Comprehensive Plan of Action on Preventing and Control of Avian Influenza; however, donors agreed the plan needs improvement and is incomplete. The State Veterinary Services also is drafting a separate Avian Influenza plan, independent of the Ministry of Agriculture's plan. At this point, individual departments are adopting their own plans because the bureaucracy involved in approving a plan signed off by President Rahmonov would take too long.

¶3. Experts fear that spring bird migration patterns could put Tajikistan at high risk for Avian Influenza. Tajikistan borders at least one affected country. Notably, China has reported cases along its western border near Tajikistan. A park ranger at Tigrovaya Balka National Park on Tajikistan's southern border with Afghanistan, commented that he fears birds migrating through the park from Afghanistan would bring Avian Influenza into Tajikistan. He told PolOff he had raised this with the State Veterinary Service, and requested more funding for monitoring stations, but it ignored his warnings.

¶4. Tajikistan's government has not always been forthcoming with information about disease outbreaks and deliberately covers up outbreaks. If a case of Avian Influenza were to occur in Tajikistan, the government may not inform the international community. Farmers also have no incentive to inform authorities. As policy now stands, the government offers no compensation for the loss of a poultry flock. FAO estimates up to 80 percent of the domestic fowl in Tajikistan are "backyard flocks." Families detecting sick birds, without promise of compensation, would be most likely to try to sell them at local markets.

¶5. International Finance Corporation's Paul Heidloff, an agriculture specialist who has developed poultry vaccination and quarantine programs over the past fifteen years, is advising the World Bank to assist Tajikistan to establish strategic preventative measures. Heidloff said the World Bank is considering providing Tajikistan with a grant to reimburse farmers for destroyed flocks and monitoring assistance. The government needs to monitor both commercial and village farms weekly and should work to explain the importance of Avian Influenza and seek the farms' full cooperation. If a full outbreak were to occur, Tajikistan would need to cull 25% of its birds and compensate farmers approximately \$5 million for destroyed poultry.

¶6. FAO has taken the lead on coordinating donor activity and keeping the international community informed on Avian Influenza activities. FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) have set up a joint technical task force on Avian Influenza to support coordination among Tajikistan's various government agencies dealing with Avian Influenza. FAO's top priorities include setting up an Avian Influenza Unit, establishing a poultry monitoring network throughout Tajikistan, upgrading diagnostics facilities, and implementing more sensitive testing

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methods. FAO will conduct a full assessment of Avian Influenza risks in Tajikistan and advise the government to change its contingency plans based on FAO findings.

¶7. COMMENT: No coordinated national action plan or plan of contingency exists for President Rahmonov, which indicates that Avian Influenza remains a priority only for the relevant ministries and not at the presidential or senior adviser level. The Tajik government from the top down needs to engage with international organizations. Tajikistan relies heavily on international donors to assist in all Avian Influenza efforts, including testing and training inspectors. The Ministry of Health requested assistance from the United States to fund training programs for its officials. USAID has submitted the proposal for funding. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND